




Public encouraged to report illegal tobacco sales

 Ever seen cigarettes sold in your neighbourhood, on social media or anywhere other than a shop?

Trading standards teams across Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset are looking into the supply of illegal tobacco in the area, and are asking for any information that can help tackle the problem.

“We know that illegal and fake cigarettes are sold in Dorset,” says Richard Herringshaw, principal trading standards officer at Dorset County Council. “It’s cheap and not regulated in the same way as normal tobacco is, which means it is often sold to children.”

But it’s not just children that can be affected: “The illegal tobacco trade is often seen by people to be helping local communities, providing a cheap alternative to taxed tobacco, but it actually does the opposite by funding organised crime and drawing people into that lifestyle and culture,” says Richard.

All tobacco products cause harm. Whether they’re bought legally from a retailer or illegally on the black market. Tobacco products – legal or otherwise – contain more than 4,000 chemicals, at least 60 of which are known to trigger cancer. Every year, smoking causes 80,000 premature deaths in England alone.

Illegal tobacco products aren’t subject to the usual regulations so the contents are unknown. They could also burn quicker, which is a known cause of fire. This uncertainty is something Richard feels smokers should be aware of, “The key question people who buy illegal tobacco need to ask themselves is: are you confident you are getting what you pay for?”.

The message for residents is to be vigilant and report anything you suspect to be connected with the illegal tobacco trade. “We can’t tackle illegal tobacco without the help of people in the communities where it’s being sold,” says Richard. “We know that illegal tobacco is sold on social media, at retail premises, in pubs and betting shops and from houses, but we need more information. You may feel that it doesn’t affect you or that it is not doing any harm. This is not the case.”

If you have information about illegal tobacco being sold in your neighbourhood, you can report it by calling the Citizens Advice Consumer Service 03454 040506.

[For journalists: image of counterfeit tobacco seized by Dorset County Council trading standards.](#)